

What are Dust Storms?

Dust storms are natural events and are common in parts of the world with dryland areas. Much of Australia's land surface is made up of deserts and semi-arid rangelands. Periods of severe and widespread drought can dramatically increase the likelihood of major dust storms, particularly during the summer months. Dust storms are caused when strong, turbulent winds greater than about 30 km per hour, carry fine particles of dust from the surrounding area. Dust storms reduce air quality and visibility and may have adverse effects on health, particularly for people who already have breathing-related problems.



Are dust storms dangerous?

Dust storms can be harmful to your home, cause traffic issues, and can also be dangerous to your overall health. Dust storms cause issues with a home, and it's not just visual. While dust particles can make your house look dirty and unkempt, the dust can also harm appliances and equipment.

Anyone driving through a large dust storm may have trouble with visibility, and traffic collisions are a common threat to human health when the dust is dense. The most significant threat, however, could be to human health, especially for people who suffer from respiratory issues. During a dust storm, tiny particles of dust become airborne and

can be inhaled. Regardless of someone's physical condition, inhaling dust creates a wide range of issues. However, if you have asthma, allergies, or COPD, the dust can be particularly aggravating. Dust can also get into your eyes, creating significant irritation. Fortunately, there are ways to protect your home and your health during the dust storm season.



Health effects of dust storms

Dust particles vary in size from coarse (non-inhalable) to fine (inhalable), to very fine (respirable). Coarse dust particles generally only reach as far as the inside of the nose, mouth or throat. Smaller or fine particles, however, can get much deeper into the sensitive regions of the respiratory tract and lungs. These smaller dust particles have a greater potential to cause serious harm to your health.



Commonly, particles in dust storms tend to be coarse or non-respirable and do not pose a serious health threat to the general public. However, some people with pre-existing breathing-related problems, such as asthma and emphysema, may experience difficulties.



How to protect your home

There are two ways to help protect your home from the dust storms, Keep your roof in good shape and turn off the A/C. By keeping your roof in good shape, the high winds from dust storms can be particularly damaging to your home. Make sure your roof is in tip-top shape and you'll be less likely to need repairs after a major wind storm. Regularly inspect the windows and replace any shingles that look worn. Again, if you're not sure whether you can handle this task, have a professional do it for you.



Turning off the A/C means most people have their air conditioners running when a storm comes along, but to ensure that dirt does not get pulled into the house, it's best to shut it off for the duration of the storm. When the air conditioner is running, it can suck fine dust into the unit and eventually pump that dust into the living space of your home. This can not only damage the unit but could fill your home with air pollution, creating a potentially harmful situation for anyone with asthma or dust allergies.

Why servicing your air conditioner & ducted heating is important

Due to the recent dust storm this year in Australia, it could have impacted your air conditioning, Split system, evaporative cooling & ducted heating unit.

While air conditioners/ ducted heating operates as sealed systems, it is possible for excessive dust to harm the unit and possibly find its way into the vents.

With dust storms, you need to clean and maintain the A/C, Split system, evaporative cooling and Ducted heating regularly.

Your unit will likely be able to handle a dust storm, but after a dust storm makes sure to get the unit serviced if it has not been serviced for long.

Having quality indoor ventilation can help remove dust and debris from the home. Fans and vents can be useful for keeping air moving, which will keep dust from settling in the home. Good ventilation in the living space and in the attic can help the overall air quality in your home, giving you better comfort and helping you avoid indoor pollution that could trigger asthma or allergies.



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